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## *The Assault*

How **BIG PHARMA**  
and insurers are  
leaving Minnesotans  
sick, hospitalized,  
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**Al Di Meola Past, Present, Future**  
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# CITY PAGES

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## THE SHORTLIST

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NICK MEZA

## THE STAT SHEET

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Welfare Colder Products will receive to relocate its facilities from St. Paul to Roseville.

**"Remember, you aren't stuck in traffic, you are traffic."**

Reader Brad Hemak responds to "Yes, Twin Cities traffic is sucking more lately, and it's about to get worse," at [citypages.com](#).

## CEO PAY SOARS

**REPUBLICANS'** "middle-class tax cut" offered slight savings to most Americans. But the true beneficiaries were—surprise!—corporate executives.

The idea was that slashing corporate tax rates would spur investment and wage increases. Yet this brand of trickle-down economics hasn't worked for 40 years. Instead, companies largely spent the savings on stock buybacks, which artificially jack their value. Which means CEOs were handsomely rewarded for artificially good years.

In Minnesota, median wages for the 50 highest-paid executives rose by a full 50 percent. Yours, we're guessing, did not.

## POPULAR STORIES AT CITYPAGES.COM

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# YOUR ISLAMOPHOBIA IS IN THE MAIL

An anti-Illhan Omar smear letter is disguised as an Xcel Energy bill

Last week, Jewish Community Action, a group dedicated to “racial and economic justice issues in Minnesota,” received an interesting piece of mail.

It was an envelope marked “Xcel Energy,” festooned with stamps that said “URGENT” and “PAST DUE.” The postmark was from Arizona, probably a hint that it wasn’t an electric bill, or from Xcel Energy.

Inside was a rudimentary hit piece targeting Minneapolis Congresswoman Ilhan Omar.

“I committed marriage fraud,” read the leaflet. “I married my brother. I hate Jews. I committed tax evasion.”

“It looked like a fairly rote far-right smear piece,” JCA communications director Isaiah Breen says. It was “full

of lies”—and it was “racist” and “Islamophobic” to boot.

Xcel was quick to step in after JCA shared a photo of the leaflet on Twitter.

“We’re a company that embraces diversity and inclusion, and this goes against all our values,” the company tweeted. “It’s also mail fraud, and we are contacting the authorities. If anyone else receives this mailing, we encourage you to do the same.”

Breen says his organization was pleased to see Xcel taking action, but the whole thing left him and other Jewish Community Action members uncomfortable.

“We’re not in the congresswoman’s district,” he says. The group is statewide, but its office is in Betty McCollum’s district in St. Paul. So, Breen asks, “Why are we getting this letter?”



JEWISH COMMUNITY ACTION, TWITTER

Xcel Energy says the letter definitely didn’t come from the company. Besides, it’s postmarked from Arizona.

He’s pretty sure they’re being targeted because they’re Jewish. It’s worth noting that the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota received the same letter at its Minneapolis office. Breen thinks whoever sent it is trying to “elicit hatred” between the congresswoman and Jews.

It wouldn’t be the first attempt. A recent article in the New York Times went in-depth on the mostly Christian far right

“us[ing] Jews as human shields” to defend President Trump’s diatribes against Omar, Islam, and people of color in general.

“It’s true that Omar has said things that were freighted with anti-Semitism, for which she has expressed regret,” the article says. “But it is grotesque to argue that that excuses racism against her, or that Trump’s taunts have anything to do with protecting Jews.” —HANNAH JONES

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By PETE KOTZ

# Q

uinn Nystrom's inbox is a repository of despair for Minnesota's diabetics.

There's the dispatch from the bride-to-be wondering if Nystrom has any

insulin to spare. The woman can't afford insurance and wishes not to be sick, if only for her wedding day.

There's the father of a diabetic 8-year-old. He works multiple jobs, yet is unable to cover his deductible.

Then there's the pregnant woman who makes \$35,000 a year, too little to stay healthy. "She begged me to bring back insulin from Canada," says Nystrom, where it sells for one-tenth of the U.S. price.

Nystrom has been a diabetes advocate since age 10, when her 5-year-old brother contracted Type 1, known as juvenile diabetes. She began going door-to-door in her hometown of Baxter, Minnesota, raising money for research. Three years later, she was afflicted herself. Some 460,000 Minnesotans have diabetes. Type 1 is the most versatile, vicious of the lot, seeming to probe the body for opportunity. Left uncontrolled, it can bring on heart attacks and strokes, damage to the eyes, kidneys, nerves, and arteries, along with a cast of ailments too numerous to mention.

Insulin is the lone barrier between breath and death. "It's like the oxygen you need to live," says Nystrom.

Yet over the past decade, its price has inexplicably tripled. Wages, of course, have not.

"People are dropping out of college," says Nicole Smith-Holt. "They're cashing in their retirement, cashing in their children's college account, just to stay alive."

For the insured, the out-of-pocket costs routinely surpass \$500 a month, akin to life-long payments on a new Mercedes, with interest rates jacked at whim. For the uninsured, it's like being forced to buy a second home, easily surpassing \$1,000 a month.

These days, one-quarter of all insulin prescriptions go unfilled. Diabetics are forced to ration or do without. They're dying after losing jobs, aging out of their parents' insurance, or watching insurers drop coverage for the kind they need.

Smith-Holt's son, Alec, is Minnesota's standard-bearer. He aged out of mom's policy at 26. Buying his own insurance meant \$450 a month—with a \$7,000 deductible. He decided it was cheaper to go it alone.

# The Assault

How Big Pharma and insurers are leaving Minnesotans sick, hospitalized, even dead



COLIN MICHAEL SIMMONS

"Do I buy groceries?"  
asks Diane Heidt.  
"Or do I buy insulin  
to keep myself alive?"



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Insulin consumed half of his paycheck, so he rationed to stay afloat. Alec was dead within a month.

These are merely the headline cases. Left unchecked, thousands more are destined to die quietly from complications, desperate and broke.

While the rest of the developed world regulates the price of medicine, this is a crisis unique to America's winner-take-all health system. Asked why, its victims inevitably circle back to a single word.

"I hate to say it, but greed," says Deb Souther, who can no longer teach preschool.

"Absolutely money and greed," says Michele Holcomb, whose daughter has been hospitalized multiple times.

"It's Big Pharma's greed," says Diane

balance sheets reveal companies fat and happy. Novo Nordisk, for example, registered profits of \$1.57 billion for the first quarter of this year alone.

This leads American diabetics to a singular conclusion: They're being fleeced.

Manufacturers "can charge whatever they want here," says Minnesota state Sen. Matt Little (D-Lakeville). "And they're proving they will charge anything they want here. People know they're getting gouged."

A three-company industry might suggest some form of competition. That's only true in theory. The human body is a delicate instrument. While one brand of insulin might keep a diabetic healthy and fit, another may render them fatigued or prone to allergic reaction. This often

"PEOPLE ARE DROPPING OUT OF COLLEGE. THEY'RE CASHING IN THEIR RETIREMENT, JUST TO STAY ALIVE."

Heidt, a retiree from Eden Prairie who can rarely afford to leave her house. "Hey, we can charge what we want, and if you wanna stay alive, you'll pay it."

### THE PREDATORS' TURF WAR

Insulin was invented by Canadian doctors a century ago, before pharma grew its fangs. They sold their patent to the University of Toronto for \$3, forgoing treasure to lift humanity.

Scroll forward 100 years and just three companies—Novo Nordisk, Sanofi, and Eli Lilly—control an estimated 96 percent of the world market. You could say they're rather fond of treasure.

Insulin is cheap to produce, costing between \$3 and \$7 a vial, according to a recent Harvard study. The drug's last significant improvement came in the mid-1990s.

But since then, the price has rocketed by 1,200 percent. A single vial now runs \$300 to \$400.

Ken Inchausti, spokesman for Novo Nordisk, says other costs factor into this skyward leap, such as regulations, research for newer drugs, and those batteries of sales reps swarming your doctor's waiting room.

Yet across the border in Canada, our northern neighbor places a higher premium on the health of its citizens, limiting what drugmakers can charge. Those same vials go for around \$30.

Pharma execs admit insulin is still profitable at the Canadian price. Their

whittles their choice to a single option, providing manufacturers no incentive to compete on price.

Examine any graph of rate hikes over the years, and you'll see all three firms raising prices in seeming choreography. When one goes up, the others briskly follow.

"Those charts don't lie," says Smith-Holt. "Those three companies simultaneously raise their prices in lockstep." Last fall, former Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson filed suit, charging them with "deceptive, misleading, and misrepresentative" pricing.

Yet Big Pharma isn't the only Goliath feasting on the ill. Insurers are muscling in on its territory.

Your insurance company employs something called a pharmacy benefits manager. It's charged with negotiating prices with drugmakers, and it wields a mighty sword. If insulin firms offer insufficient discounts, rebates, and fees, they face the threat of lost sales when insurers drop their wares from coverage.

Put in gangland terms, it's as if the original extortionist is now being extorted by a meaner crime family.

Nicolas Kressmann, a spokesman for Sanofi, says his company's price to insurers has actually fallen by 25 percent since 2012. These savings are ostensibly passed on to patients. At least that's the claim. The money trail says otherwise.

Since prices keep levitating—along with premiums and deductibles, which have quadrupled in the past decade—all that coin appears to be landing in the pockets of benefit managers and giants like



COLIN MICHAEL SIMMONS

Minnetonka's UnitedHealth, the nation's largest health insurer. Its profits for the first quarter of this year: \$3.5 billion.

Diabetics are not only left to fund this battle. They're paying with their health.

When insulin-makers won't bow, insurers drop coverage and force patients to switch brands. They know they're defying doctors' orders, leaving their customers sickly from medicine that doesn't work, or broke from paying out-of-pocket for insulin that does.

Patients can appeal, but it's a gauntlet of torment, seemingly designed to bring surrender. Abigail Hansmeyer is a New Brighton mom with Type 1. She describes months on the phone—aided by calls from nurses, letters from doctors—hoping to find some remnant of heart in an industry not known for its mercy.

All this leaves Minnesotans to take matters into their own hands. They're organizing caravans and bus trips to Canada, a country that declines to play host to this parasitic frenzy.

Minneapolis mom Kristen Hoatson has an 11-year-old with Type 1. On a recent trip to Ontario, she paid less than \$300 for a three-month supply, no prescription

Abigail Hansmeyer describes months on the phone, hoping to find some remnant of heart in an industry not known for its mercy.

required. The retail price in America: \$4,000.

In the stark relief of dollars and cents, it's the difference between a nation that cares for its afflicted, and one that does not.

#### THE MISERY INDEX

Diane Heidt is a retired customer service rep living in Eden Prairie. If you can call this living.

The 64-year-old was diagnosed with Type 1 at age 5. Though insured, her out-of-pocket costs run \$600 every month and a half, leaving her a choice between eating and breathing.

"Do I buy groceries?" she asks. "Or do I buy insulin to keep myself alive? We hardly ever go out to eat, to a movie, whatever. It's depressing. I'm pretty much stuck here, looking out my window."

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Deb Souther knows the ravages of Type 1. Her eyesight is going. She can't feel her feet and struggles to walk, forcing her to retire from her job as a preschool teacher when she kept tripping over the kids. Hospitalization arrives multiple times each year. Her insurer does its best to stoke her agony.

Insulin costs her \$700 a month. So when Souther's insurer dropped coverage for the brand that worked, the St. Paul Midway resident couldn't afford to pay hundreds more out-of-pocket.

As she appealed, the company forced her to spend three months trying another brand. "I was quite sick because that insulin just didn't work for me," she says. "I was constantly fighting the insurance company."

The van she drives is "beat up and dented and rusted. It always breaks down." So she recently hitched a ride to Ontario, where two months of insulin cost \$209. The American retail price: \$2,588.

"Our country is one of the wealthiest in the world," Souther says, "and this is still happening."

That's due in part to another enemy equal to Big Pharma and insurers. It's called the Republican Party, a virtuoso in blocking any reform. Instead of helping the infirm, it's on the attack.

Take the Affordable Care Act—aka Obamacare—a godsend for diabetics. It bars insurers from excluding coverage for preexisting conditions. It allows kids to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26, giving them a running start at affording insulin on their own. It also expanded Medicaid coverage for hundreds of thousands of people too poor to buy medicine.

But as a point of pride, congressional Republicans have voted no fewer than 60 times to repeal the law. Conservative lawsuits wend their way through the courts, hoping to get Obamacare declared unconstitutional. With the judiciary increasingly stacked with Donald Trump appointees, diabetics' life preserver now rests on perilous ice.

The GOP's rationale is part ideological, the belief that untethered capitalism lifts all boats. But it also rises from a meaner wisdom, one that says misfortune—at least for the little people—is a byproduct of moral failing or an aversion to hard work. Even if said misfortune was delivered in preschool.

Then there's the mother's milk of politics: cash. Pharma is America's most profitable industry, allowing it to spend more than any other on lobbying, campaign contributions, and the untraceable loot funneled to interest groups. Or as Jimmy Carter recently called it, the "unlimited political bribery" that's created "a complete subversion of our political system as a payoff to major contributors."



COURTESY OF NICOLE SMITH-HOLT

Alec Smith spent half his paycheck on insulin. He was dead within a month of aging out of his parents' insurance.

The broke and the sick cannot afford to buy equal attention.

Though Trump has prattled loudly about reining in drug prices, his actions betray him. Enter Alex Azar, Trump's appointee as secretary of Health and Human Services, the man charged with overseeing drug companies. As the former president of Eli Lilly's U.S. division, Azar tripled the price of insulin.

Asks an incredulous Nystrom: "He's the one tasked with lowering prescription drug costs?"

Then there's the U.S. Senate's point man on medical reform, Sen. Rick Scott (R-Florida). He's a former CEO of Columbia/HCA, which owned 340 hospitals. Under Scott's reign, the company committed "the largest health-care fraud case in U.S. history," as the Justice Department put it.

Columbia swindled Medicare and Medicaid by falsifying records and billing for unnecessary tests. It ended up paying \$1.7 billion in fines, damages, and penalties.

## THE HUNT TO SAY ALIVE

Erin Little is intimate with life before Obamacare. In her early 20s, she worked on health tech startups, at times paying up to \$4,000 a month to battle Type 1.

Little rationed and bought leftover insulin from the families of the dead, a "kind of online black market of sorts." The incessant hunt to stay alive left her haggard and depressed. "It was horrible. It's the overwhelming feeling of being



COURTESY OF ERIN LITTLE

**Erin Little** is what's known as a "medical refugee," fleeing America for countries that place a higher premium on their citizens' health.

extremely, extremely stressed. I more or less decided I'm done with this."

So she joined the ranks of the medical refugees, those fleeing American avarice for more compassionate lands. For six years Little called India home, where insulin runs one-tenth the U.S. price. She now lives in Hong Kong, where subsidized medicine means paying nothing. Foreign shores have returned her to health.

Julius Hayes also knows the import of Obamacare. Type 1 runs through his family. The Minneapolis music video director was spending as much as \$540 a week on insulin, so he'd go without for months at a time.

Hayes was working long hours. He could feel his body breaking down.

"When you don't take it, it just makes you sick. My vision was blurry. You just randomly fall asleep. You just can't get up."

He endured multiple hospitalizations. Two years after he was diagnosed, his life was likely saved when he qualified for Medicaid.

Others find no such luck. Michele Holcomb's daughter is a grad student at Montana State. Samantha Holcomb works at Wendy's, her wages nowhere close to covering insurance, much less a \$1,200-a-month insulin bill.

She found temporary reprieve by buying from an acquaintance prescribed more than he needs. Then the man went AWOL. She too has been hospitalized multiple times, once after falling unconscious at work.

Michele can only watch from afar as her daughter struggles. She lives in Ramsey, in the suburban reaches north of Minneapolis. Her husband is disabled and "our income is really low," Michele says.

There's nothing left to ship westward for her daughter's rescue.

### INSURRECTIONISTS AT THE DOOR

**F**ew expect Congress to help. Any remedy must have the blessing of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky), whose voting record is a faultless mirror of corporate interests.

Insurers and drugmakers have piped \$3.7 million his way. Thus far, it's purchased impregnable armor.

Even Obamacare did little to stem prices. When it became law in 2010, Democrats were just as wary of stepping on Goliath's feet. So they simply threw money at soaring costs. Think of it as solving bank robberies by reloading vaults, rather than arresting the suspects.

This leaves any help to come from the states. Small-town legislators don't have the luxury of barricading themselves behind yes-men, scripted town hall meetings, and prepared statements. They have no choice but to face the suffering that thrives from their neglect.

So the Minnesota Legislature is finally responding.

This year saw an outbreak of battle plans. They would force pharmacy benefit managers to disclose kickbacks, and return any savings to patients. They would make insulin co-pays mandatory from the opening bell, instead of forcing diabetics to burn through thousands in deductibles before coverage begins.

Even rank-and-file Republicans got in on the act. Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Vernon Center) is pushing a bill that would require drugmakers to alert the state 30 days before price hikes, along with an explanation for why they're needed. Their idea is to make them publicly justify what they cannot, the shame presumably bridling their lesser instincts. Failure to do so would mean \$10,000-a-day fines.

But if Washington has Mitch McConnell, Minnesota has his Mini-Me, Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, a Nisswa insurance agent. He too has a voting record that spoons with corporate interests. And he tends to see diabetics and groups like Minnesota #insulin4all not as despairing constituents, but as fronts for the DFL.

"Yes, I'm a Democrat," admits Nystrom. "Shocker. I'd like to stay alive. Most of us with diabetes are Democrats, because we're just trying to stay alive. Senator Gazelka puts profits over people, and people are going to die in Minnesota because of him."

Take the Alec Smith Emergency Insulin bill, which would provide 90-day supplies for the broke and desperate, to be funded by fees on manufacturers.

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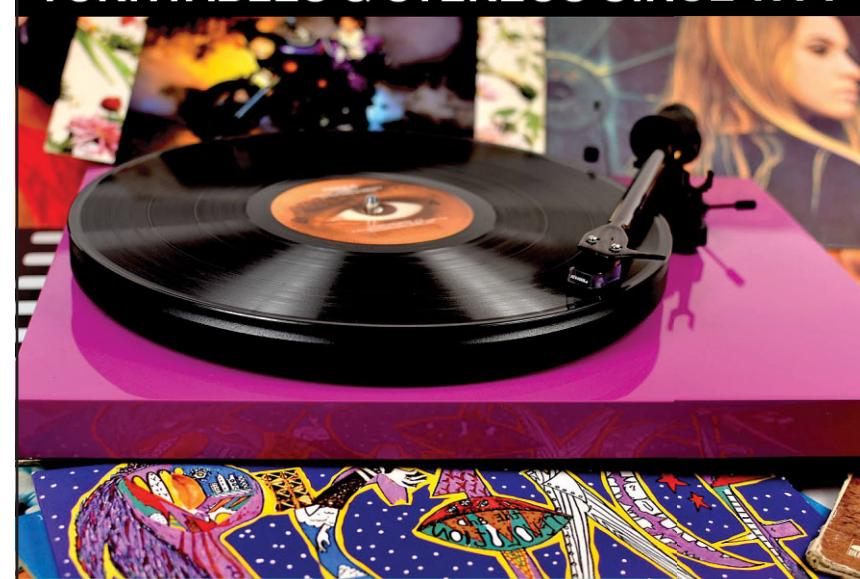
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## NOTHING BUT HEMP



Blue collar workers can get the best from their careers with CBD

People who work with their hands have their own set of concerns, needs and life experience.

Electricians, drivers, union day-in-day-outers and construction workers, all of them have things in common even across their varied responsibilities, backgrounds and interests. Interestingly enough, plenty of the things in common among working people can find hopeful solutions in CBD products.

CBD is a non-psychoactive cannabis derivative that is related to marijuana, but attracts a far wider audience for its appeal in use as a home remedy and supplement.

Across hard-working laborers, certain similarities are bound to recur. Joint pain, back aches and a string of other chronic issues are bound to arise from long hours on one's feet, lifting, or focusing on a given task that demands skill and attention.

Whether you lay bricks or drive a forklift, recurring physical activity and joint stress can lead to acute and chronic issues in health to be aware of. Science suggests one partial remedy could be found in CBD.

Across the U.S., thousands are turning to CBD for a range of issues like those listed above, and this shouldn't surprise us. CBD and other cannabis products act on the body's endocannabinoid system, or ECS, in a way that scientists and health professionals are understanding better all the time.

Despite the fact results are largely preliminary, a booming market and scores of testimonials seem to support what studies we do have. Multiple studies published at the National Institutes of Health suggest that CBD and other cannabinoids have positive effects on treating chronic pain, arthritis and other woes.

Interestingly, CBD has broken through many of the generational and cultural barriers that other cannabis products haven't.

Where some older people were resistant to even medical forms of marijuana in other states, CBD's ability to confer benefits without the high has attracted a wide, diverse group of users and loyal fans.

This is especially heartening in wake of the 2018 Farm Bill that legalized CBD products in the U.S., bringing a sweep of new and exciting products for a groundswell of newly-interested in their potential benefits.

Further, many users of the new CBD products, which include joint creams, oils, lotions, and edibles, choose them over harmful and addictive pharmaceuticals.

And it's no surprise how this might help American working people, who in recent years have been among the most afflicted by a disastrous epidemic of addiction to and overdose on opioids from prescription pain killers and other drugs.

For the sake of workers across the U.S., CBD's proliferation couldn't sound better.

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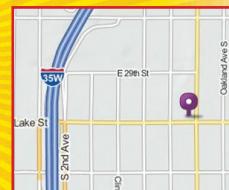
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Alec's mom, Nicole Smith-Holt, believes it was ransacked by pharma lobbyists who swarmed St. Paul.

Legislators aren't assumed to be experts in all. So Republicans in particular rely on corporate lobbyists to relay the nuances. They had a compelling tale to tell.

Lobbyists noted insulin-makers' patient assistance and coupon programs. Eli Lilly's plan to release a new half-price brand. And Novo Nordisk's "Walmart insulin," as it's known, which sells for \$25 a vial. Spokesman Ken Inchausti estimates it's used by 500,000 Americans.

Taking those examples at face value, one could believe the fine people of pharma are doing all they can to allay the pain. But lobbyists were peddling "a lot of half-truths to our senators," counters Smith-Holt.

The programs and coupons are "very difficult to get, with very specific qualifications," says Souther. Eli Lilly's half-price drug will still come with a 400 percent markup over the Canadian rate. And many diabetics note that Walmart insulin is built from pre-'90s science, unstable and leaving them sick.

Republicans blocked the Alec Smith act, preferring it be funded by charities and voluntary donations from pharma, along with millions from the state. Diabetics were defeated again.

"Why would we not have the manufacturers included in the solution, when they created the problem?" asks Nystrom. "Why would we have the good citizens pay for emergency insulin, which only encourages these manufacturers to keep raising those prices?"

If Republicans balk at nicking pharma for something as basic as emergency aid, they're sure to recoil at Lakeville Sen. Matt Little's cure, an idea tested and true across the industrialized world. He wants Minnesota to regulate prices at every stage, from insurer to pharmacy.

Minnetonka mom Sara Ginsburg can only imagine such a world. She has Type 1, as does her son. But Josh Ginsburg recently aged out of his parents' insurance. A job selling cars will inevitably fall short of funding his insulin, Sara is certain. "I don't want him to have this burden his whole life."

On a recent trip to Ontario, she paid \$30 for "a little tiny vial" that runs \$340 back home. "When we were in Canada, it was like gold was handed to us."

Senator Little admits his plan is "drastic." It requires his colleagues to choose between the thickness of CEO wallets and the lives of countless Minnesotans. For the past 20 years, they've stood with the wallets.

Yet there's a growing recognition that the gluttony has turned lethal. And woe to the politician who continues to defend the defenseless.

So Little will keep shoving. It's time, he believes, "to do the right thing." CP

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BY JERARD FAGERBERG

**W**hen you think organic, an immediate image comes to mind: a bumpy, freckled heirloom tomato. A bushel of herbs. A cornucopia erupting with broccoli. Kale. Never do you think of a crisp pilsner or a bottle of distilled corn mash.

In 1997, organic food sales totaled only \$3.6 billion. Last year, that number crested above the \$50 billion mark for the first time, and nearly 6 percent of all food raised in the United States today is certified organic. But the surge has not translated to the booze market. Absent that visual association, alcohol shoppers decide on their intoxicant of choice without ever considering if the thing they're drinking was made with pesticides, GMOs, or sustainable farming techniques.

"The demand for organic is very broad, but not very deep," says Danny Schwartzman, owner of Whittier restaurant Common Roots. "A lot of people are interested in it, but once you're beyond the grocery store shelf, there's not very many people demanding it. Distilled and brewed stuff is a few steps removed from that."

Schwartzman is a firebrand in the sustainable food community. He's served organic brands like Minnesota's own Prairie Organic Spirits in his restaurant, but his diners don't order cocktails with the same intent that they do shakshuka. Schwartzman's words echo a question no brewer, distiller, or retailer has quite cracked: Why aren't there more options for organic shoppers who want to catch a guilt-free buzz?

"The customer is the same person, they're just not given the option," says Mike Duggan, CEO of Prairie. "We know that 80 percent of U.S. households have something organic in them today. We also know that 65 percent of people, when given the choice and relatively the same price, they'll choose organic."

Prairie, produced by Princeton's Phillips Distilling, is the largest of a very small population of organic distillers in the United States. Locally and nationally, they've led the charge to get USDA-certified organic booze into the glasses of local drinkers. Earlier this year, they committed 1 percent of all sales to helping farmers transition from conventional to organic, with the aim to drag the beverage world along with them.

Prairie has increased production from 12,000 to 200,000 cases per year since 2012, but the uptick hasn't been the ground-

# SUSTAINABLE BUZZ

The natural food market is exploding, so why aren't drinkers going organic, too?



JERARD FAGERBERG

swell it anticipated when the company was founded in 2008. Organic represents .01 percent of all alcohol sales in the U.S. today. Prairie's ultimate goal is to raise that figure to 5 percent, a market change that would prevent an estimated 7.4 million pounds of pesticides from being dumped into the ground.

"The consumer is gonna lead the way," Duggan says.

The beverage world is much bigger than liquor, and Prairie isn't alone in its crusade for a sustainable buzz. St. Paul's Bang Brewing opened in 2013 as the state's first organic brewery. At the time, organic beer was the industry's next big trend. Maine's Peak Brewing had made "organic" a buzzword half a decade before, and ever since, analysts have been howling about a non-GMO, sustainable beer trend.

It continues to this day—hell, even Michelob advertised an organic beer during this year's Super Bowl—but six years later, Bang remains Minnesota's only devoted organic brewery. Owners Jay and Sandy Boss Febbo thought the market would've lapped them by now.

Prairie Organic Spirits has committed 1 percent of all sales to helping farmers transition from conventional to organic. Above: Prairie's CEO Mike Duggan and master distiller Ben Guderian.

"We named our brewery in 2007, but we didn't open until 2013, and I thought someone would beat us to it," Sandy says. "Every year, we get a little bit louder about what we're doing. We want to be an example for others. There's a way."

The movement took a big hit when market leader Summit discontinued its Hopvale Organic Ale in 2017 after just two years on the market. The Boss Febbos speculate that Summit cut Hopvale because of the increased cost of producing organic beer, and distributor skepticism. But organic is a lifestyle to them, and they've started reaching out to re-invigorate their peers. This year, they started the Organic Brewers Alliance to help share resources and make sure that putting organic on tap isn't a business risk.

"We've been so heads-down working [and] we haven't had the time or the

bandwidth to do anything," Sandy says. "Now we have to do it. It's time to lift our heads up and reach out."

"That's what the Organic Brewers Alliance has come from," Joe adds. "Organic brewers are usually smaller, and we want to pool our demand so we can get farmers involved and start growing more. This is a clearinghouse. It's basically a co-op, it's that model."

Ronnie Cummins founded the Organic Consumers Association in Finland, Minnesota, in 1998. At that time, the community of health-minded produce shoppers was more of a fringe group than a mainstream movement. Today they're a multinational network that champions the best interests of food buyers worldwide. The OCA spends much of its resources on legal activities such as suing companies for false advertising or lobbying for organic-positive legislation, but its primary directive has always been public education.

"Health concerns have driven the market," Cummins says. "It's especially been women: mothers, grandmothers, parents of young children really seem to get more concerned about the food they're buying and cooking once they have kids or grandkids."

Annie's grew into a market leader in organic because mothers didn't want to feed their kids hormones. They're not making gimlets for their toddlers, so the push for organic gin isn't as strong.

The expectations of drinking are quintessentially different than those of eating. When you purchase alcohol, you commit to an unhealthy decision. What difference does it make if there are no pesticides in your vodka tonic if the whole idea is to poison yourself?

"People probably feel a little bit guilty about drinking wine or beer or spirits compared to eating healthy food," Cummins says. "They don't think about it as much. They should."

As a consumer advocacy group, the OCA operates at the same level as the average consumer. Their function is to see through the eyes of the Common Roots diner or the liquor store customer weighing Prairie versus Svedka on a Friday afternoon. Ultimately, though, they're at the same impasse as the retailers.

"It's gonna happen, but it's gonna require consumer education," Cummins says. "When you look at the damage to your health from ingesting pesticides, why in the hell isn't the organic business booming?"

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AUG  
20



AUG  
24



AUG  
31

## PALACE THEATRE



AUG  
25



SEPT  
13



SEPT  
19



SEPT  
26



SEPT  
27

## PALACE THEATRE (CONT.)



OCT  
02



OCT  
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11



SEPT  
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SEPT  
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JULY  
25



JULY 26



JULY  
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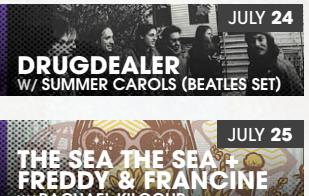
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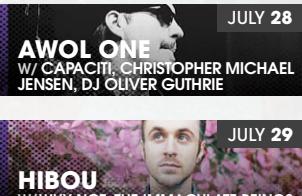
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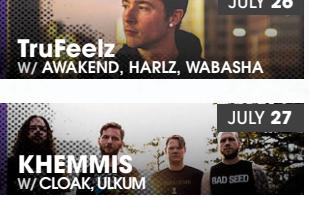
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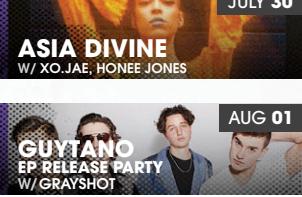
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JULY 30



JULY 27



AUG 01

# A LIST

**FRIDAY** Dogs parade through Northeast p. 18

**SATURDAY** ArtCars and ArtBikes ride again p. 18

**TUESDAY** *Fiddler* on the Orpheum stage p. 19

**WEDNESDAY 7.24**

**FESTIVAL**

**MINNEAPOLIS AQUATENNIAL**

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

While some summer festivals have a strong theme or central event, the Minneapolis Aquatennial is more of a collection of fun things to do. Those include the Torchlight Parade through downtown, family fun in Loring Park, lawn games at the Government Center, yoga in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, wild stunts at the Twin Cities River Rats Ski Show, and fireworks at Target Field. Other major events are also under the Aquatennial umbrella, such as the Loring Park Art Festival, the Nicollet Farmers Market, and Carifest, which celebrates Caribbean arts, music, and food. Things kick off Wednesday; the Torchlight parade begins at 7:30 p.m. at Second Avenue/the Minneapolis Convention Center, then goes to West River Parkway, and on to Boom Island. For a complete schedule, check out [www.aquatennial.com](http://www.aquatennial.com). **Through Saturday** —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

**COMEDY**

**DAVE FULTON**

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Idaho-born comedian Dave Fulton has been based in London for two decades, but he still manages to make it back to North America once or twice a year. “There are two people I can blame for me being here: Greg Proops and Mitch Hedberg,” he says via phone from his garden in the British capital. Back in the 1990s, Fulton asked Proops, a frequent host and performer at the famous Edinburgh Festival Fringe, if he could get a slot on one of his shows. Proops told him, “Yes, you’d do great over there.” Meanwhile Hedberg, who recorded a special in London in the mid-’90s, didn’t fare too well in Britain. “London wasn’t understanding what I was trying to do,” he told Fulton. “It was too much to get into their heads. They wanted simple jokes.” He paused and added, “You should go there.” In 1999, Fulton did, but wasn’t sure it was



The Aquatennial offers something for everyone, including fireworks, skate demos, a night parade, and more.

DUSTY HOSKOVEC

going to be for him either. “Then I had this epiphany in London,” he says. “I was walking across this bridge over the River Thames, smoking a cigar, thinking, ‘I’m just slinging jokes to drunks again like I was in America.’ Then I heard this bell and was like, ‘Oh, it’s Big Ben. I’m in London, smoking an expensive cigar, and I have the equivalent of \$1,500 cash in my pocket. I think I’ll hang out here a little longer.’” 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday; 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. \$15-\$18. 708 N. First St., Minneapolis; 612-338-6393. **Through Saturday** —P.F. WILSON

**COMEDY**

**ANDREW RIVERS**

RICK BRONSON’S HOUSE OF COMEDY

Even though he had comedy in his blood, Andrew Rivers was a bit slow to figure out he was funny. The son of

radio legend Bob Rivers (of *Twisted Christmas* fame), he was pretty much like any other teen in his Seattle-area high school. “When you’re a kid you just try a hundred different things and see which one sticks.” When Rivers and his friends started making funny videos for the school’s TV channel, fellow students responded positively. “People would stop me in the halls and would say, ‘Hey, funny video!’ And I thought, ‘Oh, that’s one way to get attention.’” He didn’t pursue comedy right after graduation, though. “In high school, the counselors don’t say, ‘You can be a firefighter or you can be a comedian.’” Instead, he began a career in marketing, and enjoyed success until the 2008 financial crash. “I got laid off. There were no jobs, so I decided to start doing standup.” Today, he headlines clubs across the country, and

occasionally features for Christopher Titus and Steve Hofstetter. He’s also hoping to restart his YouTube series, *Don’t Quit Your Night Job*, in which he tries various vocations with hilarious results. 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Friday; 9:45 p.m. Friday; 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; 9:30 p.m. Saturday. \$16-\$23. 408 E. Broadway, Mall of America, Bloomington; 952-858-8558. **Through Sunday** —P.F. WILSON

**THURSDAY 7.25**

**ART/PARTY**

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The Walker Art Center’s Terrace Thursdays is a rooftop party that’s open to anyone. Enjoy the view from one of the most iconic spots in the city

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ▶**

Northeast  
Dog Parade



**CONTINUED FROM THURSDAY ▶**

while sipping cocktails, listening to music, and experiencing performances. This week, DJ Chamun will bookend the festivities, spinning a mix of reggae, Latin, Arabic, Afrobeat, hip-hop, and more. Minneapolis-based pop group the Florists will play a set, followed by the hip-hop/jazz punk/neo-soul band Seaberg & the Black Velvet Punks. Meanwhile, dancer and choreographer Taja Will will perform "Blood Language" at various spots along the terraces. The collaborative piece uses ritual to investigate notions of identity, belonging, and otherness, especially in black, indigenous, and queer communities. 6 to 10 p.m. Free. 725 Vineland Place, Minneapolis; 612-375-7600. —SHEILA REGAN

**DANCE**

## BIRDS SING DIFFERENTLY HERE IN MINNEAPOLIS

SOUTHERN THEATER

Stories from 13 Iraqi-Minnesotan refugees and immigrants form the basis for *Birds Sing Differently Here*, a play presented by the Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project. Created by Dylan Fresco and Taous Claire Khazem, the show is performed in both English and Arabic, and features an ensemble of professional actors. It's part of IARP's Iraqi Voices, a collaborative art lab that uses theater, film, and literature as tools to amplify immigrant and refugee experiences. An earlier version of the piece premiered at the Guthrie's Dowling Studio two years ago. This year, the program has been touring around the state, focusing

on communities that grapple with Islamophobia. 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday. \$10-\$20. 1420 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-326-1811. **Through Friday** —SHEILA REGAN

**FESTIVAL**

## FLOW NORTHSIDE ARTS CRAWL

NORTH MINNEAPOLIS

Since 2006, FLOW arts crawl has been showcasing the artists, organizations, and businesses thriving on the North Side. At this non-juried, self-guided tour you'll find special gallery receptions, hands-on fun for kids, parking lot parties, music, and more. Past years have featured community dinners, pop-up shops, mural painting open to all, and a beer garden. Find more info at [www.northmpls.org/flow](http://www.northmpls.org/flow). 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. Free. West Broadway, from the Mississippi River to Penn Avenue, Minneapolis. **Through Saturday** —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

**FRIDAY 7.26**

**DOGS**

## NORTHEAST DOG PARADE 2019

NORTHEAST MINNEAPOLIS

Start your weekend off right: with a dog parade. Pups will be prancing through the neighborhood for a freakin' adorable puppy hour experience, and all canines (and their humans) are welcome. Meet in the park across the street from Wilde Cafe for dog treats to share and local vendors to explore. At 5:30 p.m., participants will march along East Hennepin Avenue, turning at Masu Sushi and then making their way along Central Avenue back to the park. Once everyone has returned, event organizers



FLOW Northside  
Arts Crawl

TIMOTHY NWACHUKWU/STAR TRIBUNE

will award prizes for the best costumes, best tricks, and more. Don't have a dog? Find a spot outside on a patio along the route for the cutest and happiest happy hour ever. 5 to 7 p.m. Free. 65 Main St. NE, Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

**TALKS**

## RAMSEY AFTER DARK: ANGELS & MADAMS

ALEXANDER RAMSEY HOUSE

In the late 1800s, St. Paul residents were grappling with an issue still familiar today: How do we deal with the people and businesses that essentially sell sex? Do we police certain things? Or outlaw everything completely? In 1881, some folks living in Irvine Park felt that the soul of the city was at stake, so they formed a committee bent on driving out the red-light district of the area. Meanwhile, others advocated for their locally run adult businesses. If you're up on modern-day debates on this very topic, you might just experience a bit of *déjà vu* at this talk, which will reconstruct history using newspapers and court records from the era. Meet the major players of the anti-vice committee, as well as entrepreneurial madams like Nina Clifford and Maggie Morse. There will be a cash bar at this discussion, which is an 18+ event. \$10-\$12. 7 and 8:30 p.m. 265 Exchange St. S., St. Paul; 651-296-8760. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

**BIKES**

## NORTHSIDE FLOW GLOW ROLL

FREEDOM SQUARE

While the Greenway Glow will light up south Minneapolis on Saturday, this nighttime ride on Friday gives the North

Side a chance to shine. Folks will meet at the West Broadway Farmers Market, where they'll find treats for purchase and free entertainment. Come bedecked in glowlights and bike lights, and wear orange in honor of Protect Minnesota's gun violence prevention initiative. Don't have any glow sticks? Event hosts will have some—along with safety lights—to hand out before heading out. Around 8 p.m., riders will take a casual cruise along the city's proposed bike boulevard on Queen Avenue North, and through some of FLOW Northside Art Crawl's highlights, which is taking place this weekend. The ride will end with a bonfire party and refreshments. 6:30 to 10 p.m. Free. 2034 W. Broadway Ave. N., Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

**SATURDAY 7.27**

**FESTIVAL**

## LORING PARK ART FESTIVAL 2019

LORING PARK

Each year, artists convene in Loring Park for two days of art and creative activities. This weekend, 250 vendors, artisans, and makers will be in attendance, sharing their wares and hosting activities. There will be woodworking, from practical kitchenware to crazy statement pieces; art celebrating things like Twin Cities landmarks, pickling, and Barbie; and giftable items like jewelry, bags, scarves, and rugs. Find hands-on fun at birdhouse-making workshops, painting sessions with wine, and kids' activities. Nearby business Lakes & Legends will host a beer garden offering pints, sodas, pretzels, and treats for



CHARLES LYON

pups, while food courts throughout the grounds will serve up bahn mi, doughnuts, fish and chips, barbecue, vegan nachos, and more. Head to the festival's website, loringparkartfestival.com, for a free bus pass to the party via MetroTransit. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Free. 1382 Willow St., Minneapolis.

**Through Sunday —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER**

#### PARADES

### 25TH ANNUAL ARTCAR + ARTBIKE PARADE

LAKE HARRIET ROSE GARDEN

ArtCars have been cruising through south Minneapolis each summer for a quarter of a century now. This Saturday, a selection of funky vehicles will make their way around Lake Harriet for a colorful slow ride. Past years have featured a car covered in wine corks, a car with a giant lipstick on top, a car painted in the style of Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, and a bike made to look like a canoe floating on a lake. To celebrate this landmark anniversary, folks will line up along the grassy spots on Roseway Road, as well as the paths lining the lake. Lawn chairs and picnicking are welcome. 5 to 7 p.m. Free. 4124 Roseway Rd., Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

#### BIKES

### GREENWAY GLOW

MIDTOWN GREENWAY

Nighttime bike rides are summertime magic. The Greenway Glow, however, makes night riding even more special, as artists and performers light the path with a variety of luminescent art installations and performances. The self-guided rides are free, while VIP rides raise funds for

the Greenway. Choose a family-friendly jaunt or a more challenging sunset excursion. VIP passes also score you two free beers, tacos, ice cream, and glow necklaces. Find registration details and more info at midtowngreenway.org. 6 p.m. to midnight. Free; \$29-\$49 VIP. 2834 10th Ave. S., Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

**TUESDAY 7.30**

#### THEATER

### FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

OPHEUM THEATRE

The latest national touring production dares to revise *Fiddler on the Roof* while still conveying the poignancy that Joseph Stein (book), Jerry Brock (music), and Sheldon Harnick (lyrics) distilled from the tales of Yiddish author Sholem Aleichem. Set in the early 1900s, the musical centers on Tevye, a humble dairyman and devout Jew in a small Russian village whose life of scrupulously maintained rituals and routines has been upended by his three eldest daughters, each of whom has opposed the faith-based tradition of an arranged marriage, insisting instead on selecting their own mates. Tony Award-winning director Bartlett Sher gives this production a reinvigorating boost, as does Israeli choreographer Hofesh Shechter, who infuses a new energy that seeks to accentuate, rather than replace, the cherished arrangements of Jerome Robbins. 7:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 2 p.m. August 3; 1 p.m. 6:30 p.m. August 4. \$39-\$145. 910 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-7007. **Through August 4 —BRAD RICHASON**

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# DON'T TELL GRANDMA SHE'S DYING!

*The Farewell* subtly explores the difference between Chinese and American approaches to death and family



A24

BY KEITH HARRIS

**T**he plot of *The Farewell* is as pithy as an elevator pitch. Chinese matriarch Nai Nai (Zhao Shuzhen) is diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, and, in keeping with tradition, her family plans to conceal that information so her final days will be happier—over the objections of her Americanized granddaughter Billi (Awkwafina).

If that sounds like tearjerking stuff with a potential for high drama, the family's response to this dilemma—to throw together a show wedding back home in China as an excuse to gather before Nai Nai passes—could be fodder for farce. The strength of writer/director Lulu Wang's autobiographical tale of culture clash is the tonal balance it strikes. Wang recognizes that families expose our rawest nerves and encourage the most caricatured aspects of our personalities to emerge, but *The Farewell* ventures into the sentimental without getting mawkish and goes for broad laughs without entering sitcom territory.

The simplicity of that central conflict gives Wang space to pivot in multiple directions. Often what matters is the action in the background, the subtle shifts in relation-

ships between family members. Among her touchstones for *The Farewell*, cinematographer Anna Solano has cited Hirokazu Kore-eda, the director who (most recently in the brilliant *Shoplifters*) has skillfully tugged at the hearts of American arthouse viewers with films probing the underside of Japanese culture. And as the camera follows the family through the province of Changchun, it not only reveals the expected cultural clashes, but also the ragged seams holding the new China together, such as the old businessmen who cavort with sex workers in the hotel where the family stays.

These sociological asides don't always feel necessary. In fact, *The Farewell* sometimes seems slightly unsure of its scope, of whether it wants to be a more intimate movie or a grander one. But this uncertainty works in its favor, creating a push-and-pull of tone. Its emotional restraint throws you off balance, leaving you to wonder if it will ever arrive at the emotional explosion and big reveal that Hollywood has trained us to expect. (I'm not telling.)

Far from her star-making turn as the catty blond party-girl in *Crazy Rich Asians*, Awkwafina steps out here with a nuanced performance. Her perpetual collegiate slump is the posture your body returns to the min-

**THE FAREWELL**  
directed by Lulu Wang  
area theaters, now playing

ute you step back into your parents' home, and her sullen look becomes a kind of mask to hide her sorrow as her complex relationship to her Chinese heritage is revealed over the course of the film. And the strength of the cast top to bottom—particularly Zhao, whose Nai Nai is strong without being a cartoonishly feisty elder—gives her breathing room, so she doesn't have to own every scene she's in.

Slipping between English and subtitled Chinese, *The Farewell* is a movie for a global age. But maybe what's most distinctive about the script is how it treats Billi's lack of a romantic attachment. Sure there are jokes—Nai Nai asks her pointedly "Do you have a friend yet?" and nudges her toward a cute young English-speaking pulmonologist—but she doesn't press the issue and neither does the film. Wang doesn't even throw a serious suitor at her to reject. As lonely and untethered as Billi feels, she doesn't look for a man as the answer, and the movie doesn't look at her life as a single woman as a problem to be solved. CP

# FULL HOUSE

Kid chaos brings laughs to *Stinkers*



DAN NORMAN

BY JAY GABLER

**B**rad has two kids. Oscar is old enough to use the bathroom by himself, but he tends to miss the toilet. Evie's still in diapers, and she knows to proudly announce when they're freshly full. For the world premiere of *Stinkers*, the Jungle Theater has employed puppet designer Chelsea M. Warren, with actors Megan M. Burns and Reed Sigmund, to bring Evie and Oscar vibrantly alive.

Playwright Josh Tobiessen and the Jungle's creative team, under the direction of Sarah Rasmussen, have so much fun with temporarily single dad Brad (John Catron) and his energetic rugrats that unless you did your homework, you might never guess that *Stinkers* was developed as a showcase for actor Sally Wingert, who plays Brad's mom, Joyce.

With a 90-minute running time, *Stinkers* would have plenty of gold to mine from the amusingly frank kids, their loving but harried dad, and their ex-con grandma. Tobiessen loads his script, though, with two superfluous supporting characters and a plot that turns on offstage financial shenanigans after Brad puts some obviously misplaced trust in his freshly freed mother.

The opening scenes are dominated by Brad's friend Calvin (Nate Cheeseman), a Kevin Smith-lite slacker full of pronouncements that are as boring as they are loud. George Keller is more intriguing as Lilith, Joyce's former "co-worker" (at the prison)—but this isn't Lilith's story, and she remains largely an enigma until a rushed epiphany at play's end.

## STINKERS

Jungle Theater  
2951 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis  
612-822-7063; through August 18

The play's balance of gag-based humor and gentle life lessons gives it the feel of an extended sitcom episode. That's not entirely a bad thing, especially when the show employs visual comedy like Calvin's battle with a wasps' nest and Joyce's not-so-secret cash stash. Set designer Warren's attractive but lived-in lake house allows action to unfold on multiple levels simultaneously.

Despite its overplotted distractions, *Stinkers* succeeds on the basis of a strong family dynamic anchored by the delightfully curt Wingert and Catron, who excels in the leading-man role of a dedicated dad. It's a treat to see Children's Theatre Company star Sigmund on the Jungle stage, and Burns goes toe-to-toe with him in their scenes together; Tobiessen has a sharp ear for the absurd logic of young siblings' obsessively symbiotic relationships.

In the program, Tobiessen writes about how nervous he was to write a play he knew would feature Wingert, making her return to the Jungle after a 15-year absence. He's given Joyce some snappy dialogue that Wingert delivers with gusto, but the best thing he did for her was to give her a pair of pint-size co-stars, painting her character as part of a broader picture.

There are a lot of plays about adults and their aging parents revisiting past missteps. There are very few that show their impact on the first steps of a new generation. □

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ZOE PRINDS

# SUMMER BUMMER

Hot Girl Summer is over. Graveyard Club usher in Sad Sack Season with *Goodbye Paradise*.

BY JERARD FAGERBERG

**I**t's a beautiful day. The sun has vanquished the July rain. The U campus is alive with tank tops. It's all such bullshit.

This weather is heinous to any true goth, but Graveyard Club have found the antidote. The Minneapolis band asks to meet up in a site no sunshine or happiness can penetrate: the Applebee's in Stadium Village. This seasonal jubilation is nothing a dozen baskets of boneless wings (sauce on the side) can't fix. Sadness isn't just a winter sport, after all. Raise your \$4 margarita goblet and toast to the perennial season of depression and self-doubt.

I walk in, and there are vocalist Matthew Schufman, bassist Michael Wojtalewicz, and drummer Cory Jacobs, holed up in a plasma-lit corner by the bar, admiring the 600 menus propped up on the tabletop between them.

You won't see Graveyard Club at the Lake Harriet bandshell this August.

You won't hear their hypnotic single "It Hurts" pumping out of a JBL Clip as a biker zips by you on the Greenway. This is not a summer band; theirs is a sound that calls for waffle fries and an ambitious amount of skulking. But their new record, *Goodnight Paradise*, released June 28, shines a light on aspects of this depressive troop that have previously been hidden.

"There was definitely a point where we were like, 'OK, we can't be the fucking Halloween band around town,'" Jacobs says. "There was a fear of that, of being pigeonholed."

Though they draw from a broader range of music than just the likes of Echo and the Bunnymen and New Order, Graveyard Club have a reputation as the Twin Cities' resident new-wave revivalists. *Goodnight Paradise* isn't a total departure from their sound, but it is indeed fun, and might help clear up some preconceptions about the band.

"It's a record about losing something, saying goodbye to something," Schufman says. "We use weather in that way, where summer is youth and winter is that isolation and that desolation of being alone. That's throughout the record in different ways. And it's a positive thing."

*Goodnight Paradise* opens with "Witchcraft," a darkly enchanted love song that Schufman admits is "maybe a little cheesy." But then comes "Red Roses," a morose fist-pump that joins Schufman and bassist/vocalist Amanda Zimmerman's voices in a jubilant death rattle, and "William," which could soundtrack the romantic denouement of the next Nicolas Winding Refn film.

Throughout the album, Schufman is more present in his lyrics than ever before.

**GRAVEYARD CLUB**  
opening for the Ocean Blue  
Fine Line, Minneapolis  
Friday, June 26

*Goodnight Paradise* covers a painful two-year stretch for the songwriter when

he ended a long relationship and started living alone for the first time in his life.

"Those older Graveyard Club records drew more from imagery," Schufman says. "I was like, 'What sounds spooky?' or whatever. It was a fun challenge. With *Goodnight Paradise*, I got over writing from the point of someone using imagery."



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Schufman derived his inspiration from his favorite confessional songwriters, reverting to a style he'd explored in the days before Graveyard Club came together. "I had more time, and that itch to write personally crept back in," he says. "I've always been drawn to Connor Oberst and Frightened Rabbit and Joni Mitchell. They were very personal, but listening to them kind of taught you how to live somehow. There was more at stake than a song about a crush."

The influence of these songwriters is especially apparent on "July," where Schufman sits paralyzed by his newfound loneliness. But the hopeless refrain of "I don't want a life with the lights around me" is not a concession to misery. It's a beautiful resignation, with all that same melancholic sway that Morrissey used to convince '80s kids that dressing in monochrome was an artistic statement. But there's a jolt running through the songs that makes you want to put the top down on your '92 Chrysler LeBaron and share them with the neighborhood.

"We could've had a really, really low-key sad-bastard record," Wojtalewicz says, chewing through a mustard-drenched pretzel bite. "Great songs, but a real downer. We eventually picked up the pace a bit with some jams."

Wojtalewicz thanks longtime producer Andy Thompson for the success of the transition. Thompson, who recorded with Graveyard Club at Instrument Landing,

worked on 2016's *Cellar Door*, and he's become an honorific fifth member, playing synths and drum machine. For *Goodnight Paradise*, he encouraged the band to take extra time to rediscover their sound.

"We took the time to fully realize it and record it the proper way," Schufman says. "With some of our early records, we had a little budget, and we rushed it. We tried to record live as much as we could, we didn't have a lot of time for mixing, and we learned from that."

Before Schufman can finish the thought, our server interjects from across the bar. "You fellas doin' OK?" she hollers.

It's a loaded question, but we do our best to smile approvingly at the pile of brittle nachos between us. And that's really the point of this whole exercise. Summertime, boneless wings, *Goodnight Paradise*—shit, existence itself—even the most joyous things are prohibitively sad if you think too much about them. You'll never get to enjoy something that won't ultimately end. But every once in a while, you have to suspend the gloom and lose yourself in the absurdity.

"There's a lot of questioning you have in your life and problems you have that you don't talk about with friends and family," Schufman says. "I would never go to someone and say, 'Hey, do you ever think things in your life are death-proof, and they last forever?' Someone would be like, 'What the fuck? We're at Applebee's.'" CP

## CRITICS' PICKS

### LOS AMIGOS INVISIBLES

CEDAR CULTURAL CENTER,  
WEDNESDAY 7.24

Originating in Caracas, Venezuela, Los Amigos Invisibles have fired up international dance floors for nearly 30 years with an array of Latin and Caribbean grooves, funk, acid jazz, twisted disco, global pop, and alt-rock. It's all marinated in peppery eccentricities, prompting erstwhile residency on David Byrne's Luaka Bop label as well as multiple Grammy nominations. Prince, classic soul, salsa, and merengue are just a smattering of their influences. The group recently followed up 2017's *El Paradise* with the steamy single "Tócamela," which taps funky rhythms, chattering guitar, and vintage slippery synths. Douala Soul Collective opens. 7:30 p.m. \$25. 416 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-338-2674. —RICK MASON

### THE OCEAN BLUE

FINE LINE, FRIDAY 7.26

Thirty years ago, when its members were still teens, the Ocean Blue emerged from

Hershey with a shimmery, dream-pop sound more English than Pennsylvanian and quickly became college radio/MTV stars with hits like "Between Something and Nothing" and "Drifting, Falling." Six years after their last album, TOB is back with *Kings and Queens/Knaves and Thieves*, which glistens with the band's trademark rich melodies, jangly guitars, and drifting synths, as well as David Schelzel's brooding vocals, while his lyrics consider love and death. This will be a hometown gig for Schelzel, now also Wayzata's city attorney. Local neo-new wavers Graveyard Club (see previous page) will also showcase their new album, *Goodnight Paradise*. 18+. 8 p.m. \$15-\$17. 318 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388. —RICK MASON

### LORD HURON

SURLY BREWING FESTIVAL FIELD,  
SATURDAY 7.27

Lord Huron make sumptuous, spacey, sci-fi folk-rock, with a fondness for ghostly harmonies and convoluted metaphysical



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## MUSIC CRITICS' PICKS

plot lines. Last year's *Vide Noir* moved away from acoustic pastoral toward a denser, cloudier electric sound, pondering astrology ("Ancient Names, Pt. 1"), lost love ("Emerald Star"), and the moon ("Moonbeam"), as amorphous neon guitar whooshes reflect the night sky. With Bully. 18+. 5 p.m. \$40. 520 Malcolm Ave. SE, Minneapolis; 763-999-4040. —LUCAS FAGEN

## CONOR OBERST

MINNESOTA ZOO, SUNDAY 7.28

Whether playing solo or in one of his many bands (Commander Venus, Bright Eyes, Desaparecidos, Monsters of Folk), Oberst always chooses songs that showcase his chatty confessional outpourings and the choked, forlorn catch in his voice. On the recent *Better Oblivion Community Center*, a duet album with Phoebe Bridgers, both songwriters entwine their voices to hit sharp contrasts at odd angles, using each other to test the limits of their melancholy. With Joanna Sternberg. 7 p.m. \$46/\$58.50. 13000 Zoo Blvd., Apple Valley; 1-800-514-3849. —LUCAS FAGEN

## TONY BENNETT

OPHEUM THEATRE, SUNDAY 7.28

Conceding not an ounce of his artistry or incomparable class to his nearly 93 years, Tony Bennett remains a master singer, his marvelous jazz-pop phrasing and interpretive prowess invigorating the Great American Songbook. His latest album, last fall's *Love Is Here to Stay*, is a collaboration with Diana Krall, who has periodically sung with Bennett for two decades, and the supple Bill Charlap Trio. All shine in deliciously nuanced tribute to the genius of George and Ira Gershwin, Bennett and Krall's vocals magically intertwining while Charlap adds exquisite support. Included is a fresh version of "Fascinating Rhythm," first recorded by Bennett in 1949. Daughter Antonia Bennett opens. 7 p.m. \$74.50-\$130. 910 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-7007. —RICK MASON

## TAME IMPALA

SURLY BREWING FESTIVAL FIELD,  
TUESDAY 7.30

The blurriest band currently headlining festivals, Tame Impala have invented their own style of ambient dance music, led rhythmically by the bass guitar but texturally defined by the dozens of watery synthesizers that sweep over the beat in waves, obscuring concrete details and edges in a nebulous swirl of electric sound. Kevin Parker's voice is also a synthesizer, although the guitars remain guitars sometimes. With Velvet Negroni. 18+. 4:30 p.m. \$55. 520 Malcolm Ave. SE, Minneapolis; 763-999-4040. —LUCAS FAGEN

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## FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

>> By Rob Brezsny

**♈ ARIES** (March 21-April 19): After analyzing unusual animal behavior, magnetic fluctuations, outbreaks of mayhem on Twitter, and the position of the moon, a psychic has foretold that a moderate earthquake will rumble through the St. Louis, Missouri area in the coming weeks. I don't agree with her prophecy. But I have a prediction of my own. Using data about how cosmic forces are conspiring to amuse and titillate your rapture chakra, I predict a major lovequake for many Aries between now and August 20. I suggest you start preparing immediately. How? Brainstorm about adventures and breakthroughs that will boost exciting togetherness. Get yourself in the frame of mind to seek out collaborative catharses that evoke both sensory delights and spiritual insights.

**♉ TAURUS** (April 20-May 20): "Tell me what you pay attention to and I will tell you who you are," wrote Taurus philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. You could use that idea to achieve a finer grade of peace and grace in the coming weeks. The navel-gazing phase of your yearly cycle has begun, which means you'll be in closest alignment with cosmic rhythms if you get to know yourself much better. One of the best ways to do that is to analyze what you pay most attention to. Another excellent way is to expand and refine and tenderize your feelings for what you pay most attention to.

**♊ GEMINI** (May 21-June 20): Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano wrote that in Havana, people refer to their friends as mi sangre, my blood, or mi tierra, my country. In Caracas, he reported, a friend might be called mi llave, my key, or mi pan, my bread. Since you are in the alliance-boosting phase of your cycle, Gemini, I trust that you will find good reasons to think of your comrades as your blood, your country, your key, or your bread. It's a favorable time for you to get closer, more personal, and more intimate. The affectionate depths are calling to you.

**♋ CANCER** (June 21-July 22): Your emotional intelligence is so strong right now that I bet you could alleviate the pain of a loved one even as you soothe a long-running ache of your own. You're so spiritually alluring, I suspect you could arouse the sacred yearning of a guru, saint, or bodhisattva. You're so interesting, someone might write a poem or story about you. You're so overflowing with a lust for life that you might lift people out of their ruts just by being in their presence. You're so smart that you could come up with at least a partial solution to a riddle whose solution has evaded you for a long time.

**♌ LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22): The Queen of North America and Europe called me on the phone. At least that's how she identified herself. "I have a message for your Leo readers," she told me. "Why Leo?" I asked. "Because I'm a Leo myself," she replied, "and I know what my tribe needs to know right now." I said, "OK. Give it to me." Tell Leos to always keep in mind the difference between healthy pride and debilitating hubris," she said. "Tell them to be dazzlingly and daringly competent without becoming bossy and egomaniacal. They should disappear their arrogance but nourish their mandate to express leadership and serve as a role model. Be shiny and bright but not glaring and blinding. Be irresistible but not envy-inducing."

**♍ VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Congrats, Virgo! You are beginning the denouement of your yearly cycle. Anything you do to resolve lingering conflicts and finish up old business will yield fertile rewards. Fate will conspire benevolently in your behalf as you bid final goodbyes to the influences you'll be smart not to drag along with you into the new cycle that will begin in a few weeks. To inspire your holy work, I give you this poem by Virgo poet Charles Wright: "Knot by knot I untie myself from the past / And let it rise away from me like a balloon. / What a small thing it becomes. / What a bright tweak at the vanishing point, blue on blue."

**♎ LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): I predict that between now and the end of the year, a genomic engineer will create a new species of animal called a dat. A cross between a cat and a dog, it will have the grace, independence, and vigilance of a Persian cat and the geniality, loyalty, and ebullient strength of a golden retriever. Its stalking skills will synthesize the cat's and dog's different styles of hunting. I also predict that in the coming months, you will achieve greater harmony between the cat and dog aspects of your own nature, thereby acquiring some of the hybrid talents of the dat.

**♏ SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Scorpio poet Marianne Moore (1887-1972) won the Pulitzer Prize and several other prestigious awards. She was a rare poet who became a celebrity. That's one of the reasons why the Ford car company asked her to dream up interesting names for a new model they were manufacturing. Alas, Ford decided the 43 possibilities she presented were too poetic, and rejected all of them. But some of Moore's names are apt descriptors for the roles you could and should play in the phase you're beginning, so I'm offering them for your use. Here they are: 1. Anticipator. 2. The Impeccable. 3. Tonner Alifère (French term for "winged thunder"). 4. Tir à l'arc (French term for "bull's eye"). 5. Regina-Rex (Latin terms for "queen" and "king").

**♐ SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): It's conceivable that in one of your past lives you were a pioneer who made the rough 2,170-mile migration via wagon train from Missouri to Oregon in the 1830s. Or maybe you were a sailor who accompanied the Viking Leif Eriksson in his travels to the New World five hundred years before Columbus. Is it possible you were part of the team assembled by Italian diplomat Giovanni da Pian del Carpini, who journeyed from Rome to Mongolia in the 13th century? Here's why I'm entertaining these thoughts, Sagittarius: I suspect that a similar itch to ramble and explore and seek adventure may rise up in you during the coming weeks. I won't be surprised if you consider making a foray to the edge of your known world.

**♑ CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): When the dinosaurs died off 65 million years ago, the crocodiles didn't. They were around for 135 million years before that era, and are still here now. Why? "They are extremely tough and robust," says croc expert James Perrin Ross. Their immune systems "are just incredible." Maybe best of all, they "learn quickly and adapt to changes in their situation." In accordance with the astrological omens, I'm naming the crocodile as your creature teacher for the coming weeks. I suspect you will be able to call on a comparable version of their will to thrive. (Read more about crocs: [tinyurl.com/ToughAndRobust](http://tinyurl.com/ToughAndRobust))

**♒ AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): "My only hope is that one day I can love myself as much as I love you." Poet Mariah Gordon-Dyke wrote that to a lover, and now I'm offering it to you as you begin your Season of Self-Love. You've passed through other Seasons of Self-Love in the past, but none of them has ever had such rich potential to deepen and ripen your self-love. I bet you'll discover new secrets about how to love yourself with the same intensity you have loved your most treasured allies.

**♓ PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20): "Poems can bring comfort," writes Piscean poet Jane Hirshfield. "They let us know . . . that we are not alone—but they also unseat us and make us more susceptible, larger, elastic. They foment revolutions of awareness and allow the complex, uncertain, actual world to enter." According to my understanding of upcoming astrological omens, Pisces, life itself will soon be like the poems Hirshfield describes: unruly yet comforting; a source of solace but also a catalyst for transformation; bringing you healing and support but also asking you to rise up and reinvent yourself. Sounds like fun!

[freewillastrology@freewillastrology.com](mailto:freewillastrology@freewillastrology.com)  
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# 331club

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9:30pm : **javier matos**

thu : july 25  
9:30pm : **serious machine nova human escape from minneapolis**

fri : july 26  
7pm : **laura and sean's movie and music trivia**  
10pm : **mike gunther and the total crapshoot, martin devaney**

sat : july 27  
7pm : **trivia mafia presents**  
**331 drinkin' spelling bee tickets**  
10pm : **tba**

sun : july 28  
3-5pm : **the experience room: ben weaver, strong buffalo, charlie parr, mikkel**  
8pm : **trivia mafia**

mon : july 29  
6pm : **storytelling podcast w/lazerbeak**  
8pm : **the roe family singers**  
10pm : **doug otto and friends**

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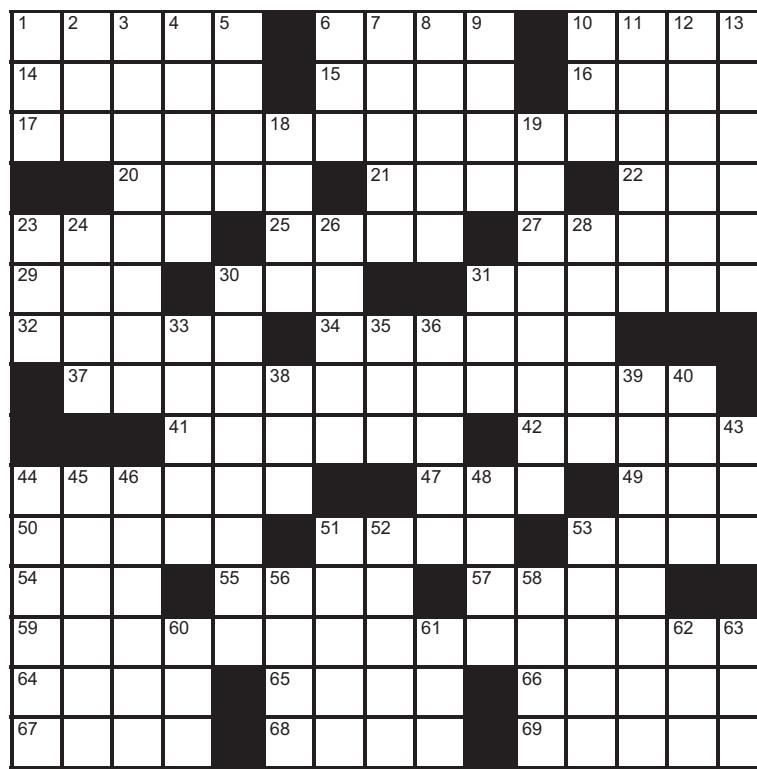
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BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

### Across

- 1 Lollipop flavor
- 5 Nate who covers polling for the New York Times
- 31 Mixtape with a lot of 90s songs on it, e.g.
- 6 The Globe's river
- 57 "Over there!"
- 33 Hiking path
- 10 Nibble (on)
- 59 Support a ceremony done at Area 51?
- 35 Leigh \_\_\_ Caldwell (NBC News correspondent)
- 14 Return the favor, say
- 64 Away from the wind
- 36 "I pass"
- 15 One who travels with balloons
- 65 Craft with wool
- 38 Bother
- 16 Bank job?
- 66 Difficult to read
- 39 Some trustafarians
- 17 With 23- and 53-Across, "Those who work at Area 51 will have all the answers"?
- 67 Yankees catcher Sánchez
- 40 Bareilles who co-wrote the musical "Waitress"
- 20 Little boys
- 68 Toys around one's house
- 43 Slice
- 21 Big name in plastic
- 69 College application part
- 44 Cold comfort provider
- 22 Wu-Tang Clan rapper also known as "the Chef," briefly
- 1 Movie supervillain who steals the moon
- 45 Peace Nobelist Yousafzai
- 23 See 17-Across
- 2 Holding ruler, briefly
- 46 Deli device
- 25 Inits. used in some home-cooling systems
- 3 Formal defense
- 48 Bicycle kicking star
- 27 Runs like the wind
- 5 Looked over
- 51 Colorless gas used in refrigeration
- 29 Faddish '90s disc
- 6 Box in a musician's rig
- 52 Dark
- 30 "The way," from the East
- 7 Subject of Gustave Courbet's painting "L'Origine du monde"
- 53 Barcelona stock?
- 31 Young swan
- 8 Fatty acid type
- 56 Peeling spuds
- 32 Big rum producer
- 9 Untouchable one
- 58 Never before, never again
- 34 Heart-to-heart
- 10 Dyna-\_\_\_ (seed company)
- 60 Important
- 37 Military plans held at Area 51?
- 11 Thing fired by thinking
- 61 "\_\_\_ perfectly normal"
- 41 Company with a "Become a Host" page on its website
- 12 Burning
- 62 Drink from a bag
- 44 National S. Rivals
- 13 Most comprehensive
- 63 Ice cream man?
- 42 Computer that had roughly 18,000 vacuum tubes
- 18 Org. focused on workplace falls
- 19 Vague notion
- 23 Canadian speed limit abbr.
- 44 Suffering person's claim
- 24 Linguist Chomsky
- 26 SAT section
- 28 Utah city near the Great Salt Lake
- 50 House lily
- 30 Lake guaranteed to make you giggle
- 51 Chopin piece
- 52 National S. Rivals
- 53 See 17-Across
- 54 High priest in Samuel

### Last Week's Answer

T	O	J	O	J	U	J	U	S	E	R	R
I	B	E	X	K	A	T	A	N	M	E	H
C	O	F	U	N	D	E	R	O	F	N	I
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D	I	E	G	R	A	N	T				

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SAVAGE LOVE

## Fingering It Out

Can I convince my wife to play around with my b-hole?

I'm a 36-year-old straight guy, happily married for more than 10 years, and a longtime reader. My wife and I are monogamous. We're good communicators, well matched in terms of libido, and slightly kinky (light bondage, Dom/sub play in the bedroom). For the last few months, I've been thinking about trying prostate play, and I have a couple of questions. A lot of bloggers and other writers in the sex-advice complex tout the health benefits of regular prostate massage, but I haven't found any academic research to back up some of the lofty claims that are being made. Does prostate massage reduce the risk of prostate cancer and prostatitis? Now the relationship question: I've brought partnered prostate play up with my wife, and it's a hard pass for her. Hygiene is an issue, but that's easy to take care of (shower, enema, gloves, towels on the bed, etc.). The other part deals with our power dynamics. Typically, I'm the Dom, and, based on the limited conversations we've had about this, there is something about penetrating me that she finds deeply uncomfortable. What should I do? How do I frame this conversation in a way that may make her more comfortable and gets her finger(s) in my ass? We've shared so much—she's an incredible partner who has helped me realize so many of my fantasies, and I'd like her to be a part of this one, too.

PARTNER PROTESTS PROSTATE PLAY

If there were any legit studies out there that documented the health benefits of regular prostate massage, PPPP, Richard Wassersug, Ph.D., would know about it. Wassersug is a research scientist at the University of British Columbia, where he studies ways to help prostate cancer patients manage the side effects of their treatments.

"I'd like to believe that I'm knowledgeable on this topic," Wassersug said, "[but] I checked PubMed to see if I'd missed anything in the relevant and recent peer-reviewed medical literature. As I expected, there are no objective data supporting the claim that 'regular prostate massage' reduces the risk of prostate cancer and prostatitis. [And while] prostate massage

can be used to express prostatic fluid for diagnostic purposes, that's not the same as using it for the treatment of any prostate diseases."

But that doesn't mean that prostate massage isn't beneficial; absence of evidence, as they say, isn't evidence of absence.

"We [just] don't know," said Wassersug, and finding out "would take a very large sample and many years to collect enough data to provide an answer."



Dan Savage

butt makes you come more often, then science says sticking things up your butt will reduce your risk of prostate cancer.

Researchers don't know exactly why coming a lot may reduce a man's risk for prostate cancer. There's no data to support one frequently mentioned theory—that ejaculation may flush out "irritating or harmful substances" that could be gathering in the prostate along with the fluids that make up roughly 30 percent of a man's seminal fluids—so, again, more research is needed. And until those studies are done, men and other prostate-having people should err on the side of ejaculating as often as (safely and consensually) possible.

As for convincing your otherwise submissive wife to finger your ass, you could search for "power bottoms" on the gay section of Pornhub—assuming your wife enjoys gay porn—and familiarize her with the concept of dominant penetratees. You could also add female condoms to your list of hygiene hacks—put one of these trash-can liners in your ass, and the only thing your wife will get on her fingers is lube. But if anal play is a hard no for the wife, you'll have to enjoy anal play solo.

[mail@savagelove.net](mailto:mail@savagelove.net)

Follow Dan on Twitter: @fakedansavage  
[savagelovecast.com](http://savagelovecast.com), ITMFA.org

**DOG DAYS OF SUMMER**

FRI & SAT  
JULY 26<sup>TH</sup> & 27<sup>TH</sup>

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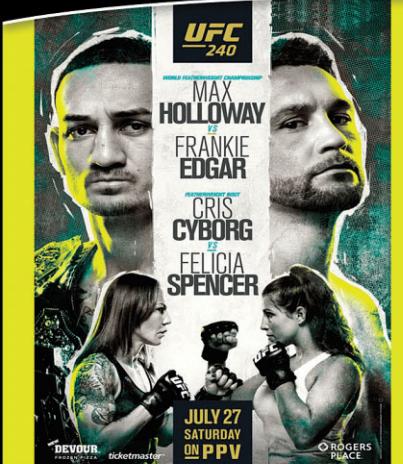
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